

# **FACTS-AT-A-GLANCE**

## **CHILD WELFARE IN CALIFORNIA**

- More than 700,000 children come into contact with the child welfare system annually.
- On any given day, more than 175,000 children are in contact with the child welfare system.
- More than 91,000 children are in foster care.
- Of children who come into contact with the child welfare system, more than 50% are age 5 or under.
- Most children in foster care (77%) were removed from their homes for neglect-related reasons.
- Every year, California county child welfare agencies receive 650,000 reports of suspected child abuse and neglect, mostly by telephone to the hotline. Of these referrals, 92% are closed after initial contact and do not receive any support or services.
- Approximately one-third of telephone hotline referrals are re-referrals of the same families from the previous year.
- Many children cycle through the foster care system more than once and experience multiple placements. Of the children who entered foster care in 2000 and remained in care for 12 months, 35% experienced three or more placements.
- Nationally, parental alcohol and drug abuse is a factor in two-thirds of cases with children in foster care. Of an estimated 67,000 infants born in California each year with some sort of alcohol or other drug exposure, up to 80% will come to the attention of child protective services before their first birthday.
- Of youth who emancipate from foster care:
  - 75% work below grade level
  - 50% do not complete high school
  - 45% are unemployed
  - 33% are arrested
  - 30% are on welfare
  - 25% are homeless.

- In 2002, 7% of California's children were African American, but constituted 29% of the children under child welfare services jurisdiction and 33% of the children in supervised out-of-home care.
- African American children in California are more likely than White or Hispanic children to be placed in foster care. They also are more likely to be removed as infants, enter foster care at higher rates and remain there, receive fewer services, and reunify at lower rates than White children.
- The federal system for funding child welfare services at the state and county levels creates a "perverse incentive factor" by providing open-ended funding for children and youth who are in the CWS system vs. providing capped funds for prevention and early intervention efforts. This "perverse incentive factor" results in the state and counties earning the most revenue by having more children in the system – as opposed to their receiving the funding necessary to reduce the need for child protective services in the first place.
- Research shows that children from families with annual incomes below \$15,000, as compared to children from families with annual incomes above \$30,000, were over 22 times more likely to experience some form of maltreatment.
- Conservative estimates of the cost of abuse and neglect to U.S. society each year are staggering: \$25 billion in direct costs (i.e., hospitalization, mental health treatment, and police services) is compounded by \$95 billion for indirect costs such as juvenile delinquency, adult criminality and lost productivity to society.